

1. 1940 Panorama



Mollie Weaver



Brenda Swinbank



Jean Burton

I'd like to give a special Thank you to three ladies - Mollie Weaver, Brenda Swinbank and Jean Burton. Over the past few months, these Hilmians have sent numerous letters to me, and each other, in the combined project to provide us with the names on the 1940 Panorama. While they have all mentioned how enjoyable they found the task, nevertheless they each willingly gave a great deal of their time to help us, and deserve a sincere and grateful acknowledgement for this mammoth task. Without their help, we would be reading numbers instead of names.

Sheila Kelsall

2. Facebook



Hello Dave.

I've created a group on Facebook called 'I went to Hemsworth Grammar School'. It's an open group for all those who went to, or worked at, Hemsworth Grammar School before it became Hemsworth High School.

Best wishes,

Emlyn Williams

HGS 1964-71

3. Transfers between schools



On 24th May 1929 a new policy of selection and rejection was introduced for the first time at Hemsworth Secondary School (later to become Hemsworth Grammar School). The Director of Education for the West Riding at that time was Mr. J.H. Hallam, who wrote to the Governors saying....

“With the development of the South Kirkby (Moorthorpe) Middle Schools the position has arisen that certain of the children in attendance at these schools wish to be prepared for the Northern Universities School Certificate examination, although such preparation is not normally regarded as part of the work of a Middle School. The Heads of these schools have been instructed to bring forward for consideration by the Headmaster of Hemsworth Secondary School (Mr. A.G. Jenkinson) all cases of children who in their opinion are suitable for such preparation and are desirous of taking the examination. If he considers they are suitable for transfer to his school and are likely to pass a leaving examination not later than the year in which they will become 17 years of age, then County Minor Scholarships will be offered to these children on his recommendation. I shall be obliged if you will arrange for the Headmaster to consider and report on such cases of this nature as may be brought to his notice. On the other hand, there may be cases where County Minor Exhibitioners in attendance at Hemsworth Secondary School who are unlikely to benefit adequately from the Secondary School Course and who would be better placed in a Middle School. Please ask the Headmaster to submit a report and recommendation on each case. Any such transfers should take place not later than the end of the term in which the pupil reaches the age of 14.”

This is the first mention of any movement of pupils between HSS and surrounding schools in the townships of South Kirkby, South Elmsall, Badsworth, Upton or North Elmsall (the catchment area for Moorthorpe Middle School). The Governors approved of the suggested arrangements to transfer pupils into HSS, while expressing the hope that no-one would need to be transferred out from HSS to the Middle Schools. They would naturally have been pleased to increase the numbers of pupils at HSS by “cherry-picking” from the best talent in the surrounding schools. The reaction of the Middle School Heads to losing their brightest pupils and possibly having to accept the rejected pupils of HSS has gone unrecorded!

In the following years the implementation of this policy resulted in new faces arriving at School during the latter part of the First year, or during the Second or even Third Form years. Much less noticeable were the pupils who quietly dropped out of HSS/HGS and returned to their schools of origin, despite the hopes that this would not happen which were expressed by the Governors all those years before. Our Forum could give transferees a voice on this topic. As far as I am aware, there were no special adjustments made to the curriculum to compensate a transfer pupil for missing the vital bedrock of information which was supplied in the first few months of attendance. Perhaps one or two such pupils repeated their First Form years? Please let us know your experiences if you transferred either in or out.

Sheila Kelsall
HGS 1955-62

Frank Morley comments:



Sheila,
“Just out of interest, you might remember that in our (my, at least) day, the “transfers” arrived at HGS about November, having spent a year and a bit at secondary modern school, and invariably went into 1C. They then continued as normal, but of course were one year older than the rest of the year group.”

Frank Morley

Eric Jones comments:



Sheila,

I believe these began in the 1943-1944 year as I went up into Form 2B. I remember that to us the transfer pupils looked a lot older than us - people like Jack Greenhough, Jim Foster and Pete Thorpe. We did not merge until Year 4 when we had to choose between Art or Science and I went from 3B to 4C. I remember my next door neighbour's boy - Bob Atkinson - transferring from Doncaster Technical School to HGS in order to do School Certificate. He was a fine cricketer and sprinter but never took to Rugby Union - being a soccer player on the books of Bolton Wanderers as a teenager. Jim Foster, another transferee, had a fine career at HGS culminating in being Head Boy in 1948-1949 year.

Eric Jones

Graham Hinchliffe comments:



Sheila,

When I first started at HGS I was in an S form. We were led to believe this meant Special (Special transfer). We were kept together for 2 years, Years 2 and 3, then we were tested to gauge how much we had learnt. In the 4th year, dependant on your results from the 3rd year, you were assigned a new class. A, B, T, S, R or Normans. The move from a secondary modern school where I was top in everything to HGS knocked me for six. I had no friends as such and trying to learn French and Latin was a nightmare, although in later life I realised how much I had learnt and now speak passable French. I can't say it was impossible to take all that information in as many of my fellow students did very well. I believe it depended on your parents and your need to learn. There wasn't any sort of support structure or help apart from Mr. Collette telling us that if we didn't work hard we would fall behind.

Graham Hinchliffe

Alan Jones comments:



".....in my second year 63-64 we had an additional class in the 2nd yr - 2S. This was a class drawn from the secondary schools on their Heads' recommendations (they would have been going into the third year of the secondary school) and as such we had 5 forms per year in years 2-5 and I think that that was continued for subsequent years. My exam years 1967 and 1969 were the best the school had ever had with the most number of passes and the highest % pass rate, with the largest Sixth Form. The Head Boy that year 1968-69 was Dennis Jordan who came from the 2S form, who incidentally got straight "A"s and went to Cambridge. I and many others were lucky to be in such an area that gave numerous opportunities to get to the grammar school. I passed the 12+ from the Sec Mod in South Elmsall. There were 5 or 6 in my year and then the 20 or so who joined in the second year, giving ample chance for the late developer. The system was good. The only problem in our area was that with a few exceptions the Secondary Moderns were not good, only acting as a staging post until the pupils went on to the mines or the factories. What they wanted was to spend money on those schools and upgrade them, making the curriculum more in keeping with their specific needs

than giving them a watered down version of the grammar school curriculum. I saw this work very well in Somerset where the schools liaised and the Sec. Mods. and offered courses relevant to the abilities of the pupils - and it worked. The political gambit of grouping all children together in one school to give equal opportunity was totally wrong in an educational sense and failed in my view but unfortunately it proved to be a vote winner for the parties.”

Alan Jones
HGS 1962-69

Edward Flower comments:



I was a transfer scholar in 1949. There were three of us that year, Ken Sharp, Roy Gaskill and myself. We arrived at the start of the school year in September and started in the second year, 2A. We were not given any special help, just left to get on with it as best we could. Ken Sharp left the following year and I left in 1952.

Edward Flower,
Guest 1949-52

4. Memories from Ruth Hudson



It is so interesting looking at the photos. They bring back many happy memories. I wonder how many remember the Staff v School cricket match where 'Titch' Manning was wicket keeper and he was too near the wicket and was hit by the batsman and had to go and have some stitches in his forehead? Or the Staff v School hockey match where Mr Hamilton hit a rising ball straight into the mouth of one of the Prefects (Valerie?) and she had to have some teeth removed. Happy days - what? Does anyone remember the owl that perched for a long time in a tree on North walk? It was a source of interest for many days. Who remembers the Film Club filming the spine-chiller "The Path Through the Woods"? I wonder if a copy still exists?

Ruth Hudson 1942-49

5. The Rugby Field



In creating the 1935 chapter of the School's history I came across this little item of interest.

The Field is a Positive Danger!

In October 1935 the Grammar School Governors discussed the levelling of a field attached to the School for the purpose of providing a suitable rugby ground. The cost would be about £350. Upon hearing of this proposal, the members of Hemsworth Urban District Council, some of whom were also School Governors, felt moved to air their views on this expenditure. Naturally those who were Governors of the School supported the proposition.

Mrs. Dooley, Councillor A. Pawson and Councillor Nettleton had all voted in favour of the levelling at the Governors' meeting, with Coun. Nettleton commenting that the present sloping field "was a positive danger", but Councillor Isaac Burns (also a member of both committees) demurred, wondering if anyone had ever thought of spending £350 on a playing field for an elementary school. With some alacrity Mrs. Dooley answered in the affirmative, "We are going to give West End School as good a playing field as the land will allow, and there is already a playing field for elementary school children in Holly Bank." Councillor Grandidge asked that the money which was to be spent on levelling the School's grounds should go to local unemployed labour. The matter was metaphorically 'kicked into the long grass' by Coun. Nettleton who said the Council could rest assured that their representatives would do all they could to help the local unemployed, but the last word was with the County Authority.

The account above shows that the idea of levelling the field was first mooted in the Autumn of 1935, but records show that the School was still requesting funds to do the work in December 1936. In my search for a specific date for the completion of the

proposed improvements, I can find no further direct references to the levelling as such; however in June 1938 it was announced at a Governors' meeting that the West Riding Education Committee had accepted the tender of Messrs. Graham, of Castleford "for carrying out improvements to the school playing fields at a cost of £155." It is unclear whether this refers to the original major earth moving project, or perhaps additional work in other areas. It may even refer to new fencing of the playing fields. What we now need is someone with an excellent memory from those days who can tell us exactly when the new rugby playing field was created.

Sheila Kelsall
HGS 1955-62

6. Some HGS to HHS Changes

I came across this site on a search of Hemsworth trying to source info on my granddad. I was at HHS anyway and so does anyone have any more photos from years 68/69/70? It wasn't until years later that I realised this had been a such a really good school. To suggest it somehow lost something when it became a comprehensive is just perpetuating class barriers. Shame because education is all about crossing them. I came from a w/class background and gained at BA (Hons) in later life. Comprehensive education is exactly what it means. It's not where you came from it's who you become that really counts. What's sad is that some think that HGS lost something when it became HHS - it didn't it. It gave so much more back.

Sharon Burroughs

A comment from Terry McCroakam:



Sheila,
Sharon Burroughs makes a comment about the change from to HGS to HHS and some of us saying it lost something when it changed. People who went to HGS were from working class backgrounds. The second point, she asks for photos from 68/69/70. When the change over happened, Form photos etc were no longer taken and the House System done away with and reformed and all competition frowned upon. This was done to lose all ties with HGS. This may answer why some of us were unhappy with the change. Unless one had been there as a pupil it is difficult so see that which was lost.

Terry McCroakam

7. HGS closures due to weather



The recent multiple school closures throughout Britain due to the snow had us wondering if our School had ever closed because of bad weather. With the Heads and caretakers living within the grounds and the Staff not so far away, perhaps it was just the ability of Yorkshire Traction to deliver the pupils which would have been the deciding factor. Please let us know your memories of any occasion when the School was closed.

Sheila Kelsall

Sheila,
HGS definitely closed in gales (1963?). The Science block roof was badly damaged as I remember and something happened to the gym. I think Yorkshire Traction kept going throughout generally. Did they use open back platform and pole buses? I remember the struggles up Brierley Hill from Grimethorpe. In fact, it rolled back round the corner at least once. There were also some freezing winters, but I can't remember HGS closing. Brings back memories of the Caretakers frozen pond just across from the Gym changing rooms...and smokers corner/ one kick steps.

Ed the Ted (1960-65)

Hello Sheila,



Re your request for any memories regarding school closures etc. I don't remember any actual closure but I think during the winter of '60 - '61 the school closed early one afternoon due to heavy snow. I lived in Fitzwilliam and the West Riding bus could not get up the hill past the church. The bus went via Ackworth cross roads to Wragby but the driver refused to return to Fitzwilliam and Kinsley so a group of us had to walk from Wragby. I remember getting home fairly late and feeling very cold. I am almost certain that, along with other pupils, from Fitzwilliam, I walked into school the following day. I remember high banks of snow on both sides of the road especially around Vale Head but I cannot remember any school closure.

Thank you for continuing to build a remarkable history of the school.

Tony White 1957-64 Talbot

Hello Tony,

Thanks for your comment about the bad weather closure of the School. I was at the School 1955-62, and so must therefore have experienced the incidents you describe, but there you go I have no recollection of the effects of that snow at all! Maybe the Shafton buses made it through. What a treat - to go home early! Do you remember how beautiful were the grounds when the snow had just fallen, especially coming through the Green Gate, and the Dell? Happy Days.

Sheila Kelsall